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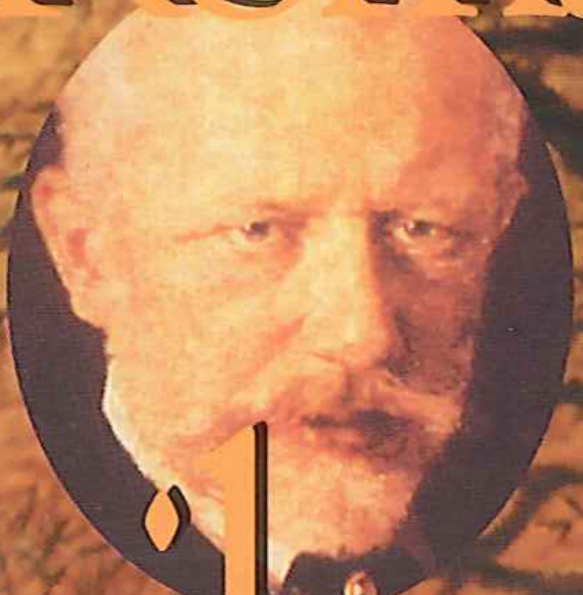
The Romantic Tchaikovsky



A CELEBRATION OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S MOST ROMANTIC MUSIC

The Romantic Tchaikovsky
Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Tchaikovsky was one of the earlier students of the St. Petersburg Conservatory established by Anton Rubinstein, completing his studies there to become a member of the teaching staff at the similar institution established in Moscow by Anton Rubinstein's brother Nikolay. He was able to withdraw from teaching when a rich widow, Nadezhda von Meck, offered him financial support which continued for much of his life, although, according to the original conditions of the pension, they never met. Tchaikovsky was a man of neurotic diffidence, his self-doubt increased by his homosexuality. It is now suggested by some that an impending scandal caused him to take his own life at a time when he was at the height of his powers as a composer. His music is thoroughly Russian in character, but, although he was influenced by Balakirev and the ideals of the Five Russian nationalist composers, he may be seen as belonging rather to the more international school of composition fostered by the Conservatories that Balakirev so much deplored.

Ballets

Tchaikovsky, a master of the miniature forms necessary for ballet, succeeded in raising the quality of the music provided for an art that had undergone considerable technical development in nineteenth century Russia under the guidance of the French choreographer Marius Petipa. The first of Tchaikovsky's full length ballet-scores was Swan Lake, completed in 1876, followed in 1889 by The Sleeping Beauty. His last ballet, based on a story by E.T.A. Hoffmann, was Nutcracker, first staged in St. Petersburg in December 1892.

Recommended Recordings

Swan Lake (Complete) (2 CD's)
Naxos 8.550246-247

Sleeping Beauty (Complete) (3 CD's)
Naxos 8.550490-492

Sleeping Beauty (Highlights)
Naxos 8.550079

Nutcracker (Complete) (2 CD's)
Naxos 8.550324-325

Nutcracker (Highlights)
Naxos 8.550515

Nutcracker (Highlights) / Swan Lake (Highlights)
Naxos 8.550050

Orchestral Music

(a) Symphonies

Tchaikovsky wrote six symphonies. The first of these, sometimes known as Winter Daydreams, was completed in its first version in 1866 but later revised. The second of the symphonies, the so-called Little Russian was composed in 1872 but revised eight years later. Of the other symphonies the fifth, with its motto theme and waltz movement in the place of a scherzo was written in 1888, while the last completed symphony, known as the "Pathétique", was first performed under Tchaikovsky's direction shortly before his death in 1893.

Recommended Recordings

Symphony No. 1
Naxos 8.550517

Symphonies Nos. 2 & 4
Naxos 8.550488

Symphony No. 3
Naxos 8.550518

Manfred Symphony, Op. 58
Naxos 8.550224

Symphony No. 5
Naxos 8.550716

Symphony No. 6
Naxos 8.550782

(b) Fantasy Overtures and other works

Tchaikovsky turned to literary and dramatic sources for a number of orchestral compositions. His first Fantasy Overture after Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet, was written 1869 and later twice revised. Bunya is a symphonic fantasia inspired by The Tempest and the last of the Shakespearean fantasy overtures, Hamlet, was written in 1888. Francesca da Rimini translates into musical terms the illicit love of Francesca and Paolo, as recounted in Dante's Inferno and Manfred, written in 1885, draws inspiration from the poem of that name by Byron. The Voyevoda is described as a symphonic ballad and is based on a poem by Mickiewicz. Other, smaller scale orchestral compositions include the Serenade for strings, the popular Italian Capriccio, and rather less well known, four orchestral suites. Tchaikovsky thought little of his 1812 Overture, with its patriotic celebration of victory against Napoleon seventy years before, while Marche Slave had a topical patriotic purpose. Souvenir de Florence, originally for string sextet, was completed in 1892 in its final version.

Recommended Recordings

Capriccio Italien / 1812 Overture / Romeo and Juliet / Marche Slave
Naxos 8.550500

Voyevode
Naxos 8.550224

Serenade for Strings / Souvenir de Florence
Naxos 8.550404

Hamlet
Naxos 8.550517

The Tempest
Naxos 8.550518

Francesca da Rimini
Naxos 8.550782

Suites Nos. 1 & 2
Naxos 8.550644

Suites Nos. 3 & 4
Naxos 8.550728

(c) Concertos

The first of Tchaikovsky's three piano concertos has become the most generally popular of all romantic piano concertos. The second concerto is less well known, while the third, started in 1893, consists of a single movement Allegro de concert. Tchaikovsky's single Violin Concerto, rejected as being too difficult by the leading violinist in Russia, Leopold Auer, later found a firm place in repertoire. For solo cello Tchaikovsky wrote the Rococo Variations and the Pezzo capriccioso. Shorter pieces for violin and orchestra include the Sérénade mélancholique and the Valse-scherzo. Souvenir d'un lieu cher, written as an expression of gratitude for hospitality to Madame von Meck, was originally for violin and piano.

Recommended Recordings

Piano Concerto No. 1
Naxos 8.550137

Violin Concerto / Sérénade mélancholique / Souvenir d'un lieu cher
Naxos 8.550124

Violin Concerto
Naxos 8.550153

Chamber Music

Tchaikovsky's chamber music includes three string quartets. The slow movement of the first of these has proved very popular both in its original form and in an arrangement by the composer for cello and string orchestra. The Andante funèbre of the third quartet also exists in an arrangement by the composer for violin and piano.

Piano Music

Tchaikovsky provided a quantity of music for the piano, particularly in the form of shorter pieces suited to the lucrative amateur market. Collections of pieces published by the composer include The Seasons, a set of twelve pieces, one for each month, and a number of sets of pieces of varying degrees of difficulty.

Recommended Recordings

The Seasons / Chanson triste / Nocturnes etc.
Naxos 8.550233

Piano Works
Naxos 8.550504

Piano Works Vol. 1
(Piano Sonata Op. 37 / Six Morceaux Op. 51)
Naxos 8.553063

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STEREO

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The Romantic Tchaikovsky

A CELEBRATION OF TCHAIKOVSKY'S MOST ROMANTIC MUSIC

1. **Swan Lake: Act II - Scène** (2:42)
   - CSR Symphony Orchestra / Ondrej Lenárd (from Naxos 8.550246)
2. **Sleeping Beauty: Act II - Panorama** (3:44)
   - Czecho-Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Mogrelia (from Naxos 8.550491)
3. **Symphony No. 5 in E Minor, Op. 64: Andante cantabile con alcuna licenza - Moderato con anima** (11:49)
   - Slovak Philharmonic / Stephen Gunzenhauser (from Naxos 8.550191)
4. **Swan Lake: Act IV - Dance of the Cygnets** (4:01)
   - CSR Symphony Orchestra / Ondrej Lenárd (from Naxos 8.550247)
5. **Sleeping Beauty: Act I - Pas d'action: Adagio (Rose Adagio)** (6:41)
   - Czecho-Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Mogrelia (from Naxos 8.550490)
6. **Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 35: Canzonetta - Andante** (7:01)
   - Takako Nishizaki, Violin / Slovak Philharmonic / Kenneth Jean (from Naxos 8.550153)
7. **Chanson triste, Op. 40, No. 2** (2:48)
   - Takako Nishizaki, Violin / Jenő Jandó, Piano (from Naxos 8.550306)
8. **None but the Lonely Heart** (3:30)
   - Peter Nagy, Piano (from Naxos 8.550141)
9. **Serenade for Strings in C Major, Op. 48: Elegie** (9:13)
   - Vienna Chamber Orchestra / Philippe Entremont (from Naxos 8.550404)
10. **Nutcracker: Waltz of the Flowers** (6:54)
    - CSR Symphony Orchestra / Ondrej Lenárd (from Naxos 8.550325)
11. **Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, Op. 36: Andantino in modo di canzona** (9:55)
    - Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra / Adrian Leaper (from Naxos 8.550488)
12. **Souvenir d'un lieu cher, Op. 42: Mélodie** (4:30)
    - Mariko Honda, Violin / CSR Symphony Orchestra / Keith Clark (from Naxos 8.550124)
13. **Sleeping Beauty: Act I - Waltz** (4:45)
    - Czecho-Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra / Andrew Mogrelia (from Naxos 8.550490)

(Playing Time: 77:32)

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